

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The following is submitted in response to the Office Action issued on December 16, 2003 (Paper No. 8) in connection with the above-identified patent application, and is being filed within the one-month shortened statutory period set for a response by the Office Action.

Claims 106-157 are pending in the present application, and are subject to a restriction / election requirement.

In particular, the Examiner has imposed a restriction / election requirement under 35 USC § 121 from among eight identified species. According to the Examiner Specie A comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 2, Specie B comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 3, Specie C1 comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 6, Specie C2 comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 7, Specie C3 comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 9, Specie C4 comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 10, Specie C5 comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 11, and Specie D comprises the subject matter shown in Fig. 8.

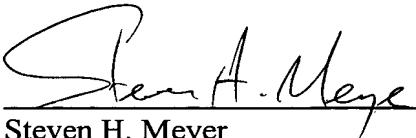
Preliminarily, Applicants express some puzzlement at the restriction / election requirement inasmuch as all of the claims of the present application are directed toward interdependently validating a piece of digital content and a digital license corresponding thereto, which is shown in Fig. 10. That said, Applicants hereby elect specie C4 comprising the subject matter shown in Fig. 10 for further prosecution in connection with the present application, and assert that all of claims 106-157 read on such elected specie C4.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Applicants respectfully request continued examination of the present application and a Notice of Allowance in due course.

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